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## It's your newspaper

Keeping you in touch with news and events in your Area of Oustanding Natural Beauty

# Coming together of 'parish plans'

By ANDERS LARSSON

BLACKDOWN Hills parishes hope to achieve more by working together - and priorities have already been identified.

Blackdown Hills Parish Network Community Plan involves 39 parishes either wholly or partially inside the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Parish representatives have been meeting as part of

Blackdown Hills Parish Network in the last two years to look at ways of achieving their individual parish plan objectives more effectively.

Parish objectives range from very specific aspirations (to provide more parish notice boards, for example) to issues that are common to neighbouring parishes as well, such as public transport provision.

"The objectives of the community plan are to provide a social and economic profile of the area, to identify what people value about it and consider distinctive, to discover the highest priority issues facing local people and then to set out options for ways to address them

"By doing this in consultation with all the parishes, it is hoped these important common issues can be brought to the attention of relevant local, county or even national authorities to help bring about an improvement."

The process is ongoing and Catherine added: "The results of this survey have so far raised nine different types of problem that could be worked on collectively, ranging from concerns about technology and communications, health and social welfare, parish plans, the economy and community safety.

"Top of the 'problems' league for three-quarters of

parishes is a range of concerns relating to traffic and - including public and community transport, traffic speed, road and verge maintenance and vehicle

It is hoped that people with an interest in working together on any of the nine identified areas will join action groups to help take forward the recommendations to be offered in the draft community plan, which will be made available to comment on in the early spring.

If you have a particular interest or expertise in any of the areas listed, please contact Catherine by emailing catherinejbass@googlemail.com or by calling 01884

■ The Community Plan development is being supported by Devon County Council through the Blackdown Hills AONB office, and is aided by Somerset County Council



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## Villagers rally to put a stop to last orders at threatened pub

By LUCIE SIMIC

A CAMPAIGN has started to keep the Royal Oak at Dunkeswell a pub after its current owners retire. Fay and Tony Perkins have run the local pub for over six years but would now like to retire — like many paople their age.

However, the pub has been on the market but as of yet there has been little interest from buyers who want to keep the business going.

Like many rural pubs the Royal Oak at Dunkeswell has seen a steady decline in business over the last few years and is now in danger of closing

There has been a licensed public house in Dunkeswell since the 1600s and the heyday of the pub was undoubtedly during the war years and just after when it was used by many of the military personnel who were stationed at Dunkeswell as a place to meet, drink and swap stories of daring escapades. It was a particular favourite haunt of the American troops stationed at Dunkeswell.

With over 900 pubs having closed this year alone in the UK a group of villagers have now formed committee to try to prevent the closure of the pub, turn it into a community owned enterprise and stop it being added to long list of closures. Landlady Fay Perkins said:

someone to buy it and keep it open as a pub and we are pleased to see that a committee has been set up to try and

"The problem is that we want to retire and can't continue to run the business. It has been on the market for while now and we have not had much interest. The pub is freehold and not owned by a large brewery so we get no help.

The committee behind saving the Royal Oak is holding a public meeting on February 15th at 7pm in the Throgmorton Hall at Dunkeswell to obtain the communities support for this enterprise and to discuss what needs to happen toensure the pub's

### Funds now available for ponds and tree planting

FUNDING for native tree planting and pond creation is now available until the end of 2012.

In the Blackdown Hills, WAVE (Water Adaptation is Valuable for Everybody) will focus on the catchment areas of the rivers Axe, Tone and Parrett.

WAVE is a European-funded project to prepare for future changes in regional water systems brought about by climate change.

Ponds help to reduce flooding and provide a valuable habitat for wildlife. Over the last century in Britain around 75 per cent of our ponds have been lost or polluted and pond wildlife has been declining.

Through WAVE funding the council can subsidise the creation or restoration of countryside ponds

that will contribute to the aims of the

Grants are discretionary and will be considered on an individual basis but the usual grant is 50 per cent of the costs up to a maximum of £500. Landowners and community groups are expected to meet the remaining costs. For more information contact 345 9188 or countryside@somerset.gov.uk.

### Panda the dog is in desperate search of home

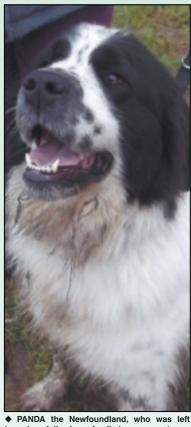
A FAMILY bereavement has left Panda, a twoyear-old Newfoundland cross without a home.

Panda arrived at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, Wambrook, just after Christmas and has been a firm hit with staff and volunteers alike.

She is a bundle of energy and would suit a family willing to exercise her regularly.

"She is as gentle as a lamb and very affectionate,"

said Naomi Clarke, animal manager at Ferne. If you think you could give Panda a caring loving home then please contact the sanctuary direct on 01460 65214.



homeless following a family bereavement

### Contact the news team at blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

### Your VIEW FROM THE BLACKDOWN HILLS team



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### Village holds elderly care 'conference'

MIND the Gap was the name given to a recent conference held in Hemyock to consider the provision of increased elderly care services in the village and in particular housing

Hosted by Hemyock Parish Council and including representatives from the Abbeyfield Society, the local housing association WCHA, and Mid Devon District Council, the group began by reflecting on the existing services available to the local elderly provided by both the public and voluntary sector.

These were not insignificant and the

work of organisations such as the Healthy Living Centre, Blackdown GP Practice and Blackdown Support Group were highlighted and commended.

Following a talk by Michael Mitchell, regional chairman of Abbeyfield, which provides sheltered housing schemes, the discussion ranged around the current care provision for the elderly and what was thought the most likely future needs for care homes and sheltered housing might be.

Given the demographics, it was thought unlikely that funding would be available for a local nursing home. It was however considered that there might be value in some sheltered housing along the lines of the Abbeyfield model.

Conference coordinator, Cllr Steven Reed, considered that the very helpful debate provided useful grounds for further discussions. Michael Mitchell. on behalf of Abbeyfield, suggested that there was much 'food for thought' and he would come back to the table with

some ideas in early 2011. Parish council chairman Heather Stallard said that facts were required to support any future steps which should be available following a housing survey of parishioners in early 2011.

There was great value in thinking

### MP privy title largely formal for MP Swire

THE MP for East Devon Constituency, Hugo Swire, has been appointed as a Privy councillor.

Mr Swire's first Privy Council meeting is on Wednesday, February 9th and he said: "I'm absolutely delighted and honoured to become a privy councillor.

"My duties are largely formal, meeting to approve decisions that have been taken elsewhere and making appointments to offices of the Crown.

"But we can exercise executive, legal and legislative powers in certain circumstances.

Mr Swire has represented East Devor Constituency in Parliament since 2001 and is currently Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

A spokesperson for his office explained: "He will join 550 other members of Privy Council, which includes all cabinet members past and present the leaders of all the main parties, the Speaker, archbishops, senior judges and some other important public figures."

Membership of the Privy Council is today a titular honour, with the office recognised as a reward for public and political service.

Appointments are made by the Sovereign on ministerial advice and are for life — and there is no fixed number of members.

## Cost-cutting and redundancies to save EDDC £2.4m

By BEN MIDDLETON

Devon District Council (EDDC) has revealed that it needs to save £2.4million in the next financial vear.

In a statement, district council officials have confirmed that staff redundancies cutting out repairs to council car parks and reviewing the office accommodation at

Knowle, Sidmouth, could help save funds. A spokesman for EDDC said: "EDDC has revealed some of the measures being considerd by members as they work towards setting a balanced budget for the next financial year against a backdrop of reduced central funding and frozen council

"The council needs to make savings totalling around £2.4million next year and also has to prepare for more savings to be found in the next few years."

On Monday last a district council task force met and agreed on a set of recommendations that they believe will deliver the savings needed to balance the

The task force recommendations will now go before the EDDC overview and scrutiny committee.

If the recommendations are accepted, they will go forward to the executive board on Wednesday, February 9th, and then to a meeting of the full district council on Wednesday, February 23rd.

Cost-saving recommendations puriforward by the task force include cutting 12 back office posts, ceasing maintenance of bus shelters, cutting out repairs to footpaths and other works in cemeteries, cutting repairs to all-weather pitch fencing at Colyton Grammar School and turning off and no longer maintaining the festoon lighting on Seaton seafront.

The spokesman added: "Depending on

discussions at the meetings in the next month or so, the recommendations may still change - so it's possible that some items may be put back in and others could be taken out."

said: "People will note that the savings we are considering are spread right across the council's many services.

"No stone has been left unturned in the search for better value and we have tried to be as fair as possible in the distribution of

"We are living in very hard times and tough decisions have to be taken. There is still time for members to change some of the detail but the emphasis of the change is simple - to manage our affairs in such a way that we can stay solvent, freeze council tax and still continue to deliver as many front-line services as we possibly

EDDC leader, Sara Randall Johnson,

the savings

Ceremony in the latter part of February Crews called to fire at primary

> FIRE crews from Honiton and Cullompton were called to reports of a fire in the primary school building at Broadhembury.

Equestrian firm

gets nominated

for top award

CLIPPERSHARP Ltd, a Westcountry business,

has been nominated for the SEIB (South Essex

Insurance Brokers) Equestrian Retailer of the

Based in Culmstock, Devon, the company was started

in 1994 and is now a firmly recognised and respected

company within the Equestrian industry.

Initially specialising in clippers and grooming

products, it has more recently expanded and carries a

comprehensive range of equestrian products.

The company has a small retail premises, but also

operates a mail order business with an on-line

Sales director Vicky Goody said: "The expansion into

a national company came about with the onset of the

web in the late 1990s has allowed our business to grow

tremendously, we also decided to have a mobile unit to

cover the more local shows and events and this has also

"We were genuinely taken aback to receive the news

of this nomination, and are delighted that our customers have taken the trouble to put us forward. To

The finals for this prestigious award will be held at BETA (British Equestrian Trade Association) Award

get this far is of great credit to us and our staff."

ecommerce website for all the products.

been a contributing factor to our success.

Year Award — 2011.

The incident took place just before 5pm on Friday, January 14th.

The fire involved a strip on a suspended ceiling.
Crews used one hose reel jet, a short extension ladder

and thermal imaging camera to extinguish the flame

### **YOUR PAPER FOR YOUR** COMMUNITY

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◆ STAFF at Yeovil-based Screwfix have donated animal food and money to Ferne Animal Sanctuary, near Chard. The food and money were gathered during December and Screwfix's Claire Bryant recently visited the sanctuary. Ferne Animal Sanctuary director Jenny Wheadon was very grateful and said: "Local business supporting the sanctuary in the current economic climate is invaluable." Claire Bryant is pictured, left, with Jenny Wheadon

### all for businesses to enrol

THE Blackdown Hills Businesss Association (BHBA) is one of the largest membership organisations in the area and offers support and opportunities to businesses on the borders of Devon and Somerset.

The BHBA is encouraging all local businesses to send their details for inclusion in the Blackdown Hills Directory for 2011.

The Blackdown Hills Directory is

local directory to help local people and businesses buy local products and The Blackdown Hills Directory is also

a valuable handbook for visitors to the area, who are looking to stay in the area, eat local food and take part in local activities.

TheBHBA already has an up to date web version of the Blackdown Hills Directory which offers tourist accommodation and activities and for

visitors to the Devon and Somerset borders.

As well as a range of products and services for people living and working in the area

A BHBA spokesperson said: "This is the definitive guide to businesses in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding business is included

To sign up contact Val Baker on 01823 681484 or email info@bhba.org.uk



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### 60 step out into new year

MORE than 60 walkers, including children, assembled in the centre of Stockland on New Year's Day for an annual walk.

Outside and opposite the King's Arms, walkers inspected a stone incised with the letter C which gave directions to walk 100 paces west, which took the group to the centre of the bridge over the park goyle.

A further 100 paces beyond, towards the park, there was another stone clue in the verge bank.

The letter C is the Roman numeral for 100 and these stones date back to 1530, when Henry VIII passed an act making provision for county magistrates to take responsibility for the maintenance of bridges and their approaches.

The walk continued up North Hill Lane to the farm and beyond following the river; at the crossroads the walkers joined the footpath into the wood and through the metal gate in the boundary hedge.

Once into the field, owned by Roger Parris, the group turned abruptly left and up into the corner, where the three parishes of Stockland, Upottery and Yarcombe meet.

An oak, right on the junction in the hedge bank, was decided to be the unofficial three-parish boundary

It was then a short stroll to Corrymoor Farm, arriving at 11.45am, where the Whitleys served mince pies and delicious mulled wine

The walkers returned via Rower Hill to Wytch (built 1680), along Wytch Lane and down the footpath to Walshams, arriving back at 1.10pm where the King's Arms served warming Tomato and Basil soup.



### Plea for residents to report road potholes

COUNCIL chiefs are urging members of the public to report potholes and other defects on Devon's roads.

The full extent of damage caused by the recent coldsnap is not yet known, but those in charge fear another hefty repair bill.

Devon County Council (DCC) Cabinet member for Highways and Transportation, Stuart Hughes, said: "It's too early to predict to what extent the recent severe weather may have damaged our roads, but it's likely to have again caused considerable damage for a third winter in a row.

"We still need members of the public to be our eyes and ears and report potholes to us because our road network is a vital asset for the local economy, local business and tourism.

"Our teams are responding to these reports and over the coming weeks and months we'll be keeping a watchful eye on the situation."

A DCC spokesperson added: "The council repaired nearly 200,000 potholes and safety defects on its 8,000 mile network in 2010 as around £11million was spent on reactive repairs and resurfacing highways dam by last winter. That dwarfs the 40,000 potholes filled in 2009, which in itself was double the usual amount during a normal year."

Potholes and safety defects on the county's roads can be reported online at www.devon.gov.uk or by calling 0845 155 1004.

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## Public asked to be 'citizen scientists' by sky campaigners

#### By ANDERS LARSSON

DARK sky campaigners are asking people in rural areas to become citizen scientists during Star Count Week, which runs from Monday, January 31st to Sunday, February 6th.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies (CfDS) are behind the initiative, and star gazers will be asked to count the number of stars they can see within the constellation of Orion.

The results will help create a Star Count map, illustrating how light pollution is affecting the view of the night sky across the UK

Campaigner at CPRE, said: "Light pollution damages the character of countryside, blurs the distinction between town and country, and denies people the experience of a dark, starry sky.
"The Star Count survey will help

us measure the extent of light pollution. We want to use this evidence to convince ministers and local councils of the need to take action to tackle it, for example by ensuring that the correct lighting is used only where it is needed and when it is needed.

"This would cut light pollution, reduce carbon emissions and save money at the same time.

"Some local authorities are already taking action to tackle light pollution in their areas; we need more to do the same."

The campaigners claim light

pollution is a growing problem, with more and more of the UK left without a clear view of the night

CfDS co-ordinator Bob Mizon added: "The light from distant stars and galaxies takes hundreds, thousands, even millions of years to reach our eyes.

"What a tragedy to lose it on the last millisecond of its journey."

The previous Star Count Week took place in 2006/07, and attracted nearly 2,000 responses.

Two per cent of respondents said they could see more than 30 stars in Orion, compared with 54 per cent who saw fewer than 10 - a level which indicates severe light pollution according campaigners.

Participants can choose any night between Monday, January 31st and Sunday, February 6th but the sky must be clear, with no haze or clouds, so there is the best chance of seeing stars. It is recommended that observations are made after 7pm so the sky is sufficiently dark.

Full instructions are available on CPRE

www.cpre.org.uk/starcount.

\* The Campaign to Protect Rural England is a charity which promotes "the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England".

\*\* The British Astronomical Association describes itself as Britain's largest astronomical organisation. Its Campaign for Dark Skies was founded in 1989, and aims to ensure quality lighting in the UK. It says that a well-lit environment below and a view of the starry sky above are not

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February 2011 5 View from the Blackdown Hills

### View from the Blackdowns



♦ THE recent frosts at Blackborough sent in by reader Lawrence Smith

# Low speed results as police carry out check

By BEN MIDDLETON

POLICE in Honiton carried out a speed check at Rawridge recently. Residents in the village had highlighted

speeding as one of their main concerns during recent Partners and Communities Together (Pact) meetings.

The speed check took place on Monday, January 17th, between 8.30am and

PC Clive Vickery, of Honiton police, said: "Concerns were highlighted regarding speeding around the school run.

"The device used was the speed monitoring trolley. Devon County Council helped purchase this equipment, which will assist us to deal with the Pact priority

"The devise is placed out at the roadside and displays your actual speed on an LED screen. This can be used without police personnel being seen, therefore giving a more realistic representation of speed.

We all know that when police are out doing speed detection, wearing bright jackets acts as an advance warning to motorists to slow down.'

During the speed check, police say that 18 vehicles travelled through the village

The highest speed recorded was 31mph and the lowest speed recorded was 15mph. PC Vickery added: "It would appear from the results of this [speed check] that the concerns of speeding in Rawridge are more about perception of speed rather than the actual speed, relating to motorists travelling through the village."

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WEST HATCH

6 February 2011 View from the Blackdown Hills

## Doodle the pup returned home after campaign

A CHARDSTOCK puppy that was missing for 16 days has been returned to his owners.

Ås revealed in this newspaper, Doodle, a 10-week-old tri-colour Parson Jack Russell, was stolen from a property in the Clay Steps area of the village on Wednesday, December 8th.

The puppy was playing in the garden of the property owned by Deanne Lord and her family, when he was taken during a daylight raid.

However, he was found by a vet in Martock and was returned to his owners on Christmas Eve.

Speaking to this newspaper, Deanne said: "On Christmas Eve I received a phone call from a vet at the Kingfisher Veterinary Surgery in Martock. She had received a missing poster that I had sent out.

"A kind lady had taken Doodle to the vet for a check-up as she had found him dumped in the car park outside The Rose and Crown, Martock, late in the evening of December 13th — five days after he was taken from us.

December 13th — five days after he was taken from us. "Doodle was filthy dirty, smelling of diesel and thin when he was found. Luckily the kind lady and her husband looked after him well. A few phone calls later and we picked him up on Christmas Eve morning.

"It was a perfect Christmas present for us all, especially the children."

Deanne added that she was grateful for all the support she received from DogLost, who Doodle was registered with after he went missing.

"We will never know what really happened. We did an awful lot of behind the scenes work looking for Doodle



♦ DOODLE has been returned to his Chardstock family after he went missing for more than two weeks

and something seemed to pay off.

"The team from DogLost were invaluable with their advice and support, they kept saying the key was to make Doodle too hot to handle. It was their suggestion to send details to as many vets as possible, which ultimately led to use finding him."



♦ MEMBURY Merrymakers performed its pantomime, Mothergoose, at Membury Village Hall recently. Some of the cast members are pictured on stage



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Our farm provides the majority of the beef, lamb and pork or all from other local farmers.

### Christmas gift arrives late in Peru

A CHURCH high in the Andes mountains in Peru has received a late Christmas present from Hemyock.

The people of San Jerónimo are building a new church and progress was slowing due to a shortage of funds.

Members at Hemyock Baptist Church decided to sponsor the windows and funds for 20 have been sent.

This included one by Jack Ould, eight, who designed and made Christmas cards to sell at the Church

sell at the Church.

Peruvian Pastor Isaias Calle said: "It is very encouraging for us to know that there are brothers and sisters interested in Peru and in our ministry.

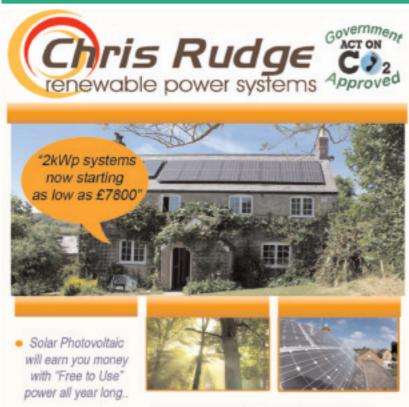
"We are very grateful for your prayers and gifts."



♦ YOUNG and old alike are helping to build the new church, right. Pastor Isaias Calle is second from left. Above, the new church being erected in San Jerónimo, Peru, with help from members at Hemyock Baptist



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View from the Blackdown Hills

## Festive elf surprise



◆ FATHER Christmas and his elf meeting some of the children at Blackdown Children's Day Nursery's

surprise this year for youngsters at Blackdown Children's Day Nursery, in Wellington, when he brought with him one of his

He arrived with one of his elves just as the children were enjoying their annual Christmas party.

It was a relief for nursery manager Trudy Kemble and her staff, as only 24 hours later Wellington experienced heavy snowfalls and they had been worried the snow might arrive early and stop Santa's sleigh landing on

The youngsters helped decorate the nursery's main play room with a Christmas theme, including a giant advent calendar, and also enjoyed singing Christmas carols.

Ms Kemble said: "The children had all written letters to Santa saying what they would like for Christmas and they were really excited when his elf collected their lists to take back to the North Pole.

"Before they left, Father Christmas and his elf enjoyed some mince pies from our kitchen, which has a maximum five-star environmental health rating for our food and hygiene handling programmes.

Blackdown Children's Day Nursery offers weekday childcare from 8am to 6pm for parents with children aged from three months to five years

Anybody who wants to know more about Blackdown Children's Day Nursery can www.blackdownchildrensdaynursery. co.uk, email gbt.bway@talktalk.net or call 07754 751750.



### Men's Met Office visit teaches them about 'petaflops'

new word to its vocabulary -Petaflop.

It also understands a little more about how weather is forecasted using data from an array of sources on land, sea and above the earth.

This was as a result of a highly interesting visit to the Met Office in Exeter recently. The men came face-to-face with arguably the most powerful computer in the world, trillions of actions per second, as well as taking a look at the history of weather forecasting

What is a Petaflop? A petaflop is a measure of a computer's processing speed and can be expressed as a thousand trillion operations per second. February, Hemyock Men will host Andrew Rawding, chaplain to 40

### Your community paper — blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

### bh Blackdown Hills Business Association Member Spotlight

### DON'T MISS OUT ON AN ENTRY IN THE

NEW Blackdown Hills Directory (sixth edition)

Businesses are invited to put an entry in the new edition of the Blackdown Hills Directory.

\* \* \*

The Blackdown Hills Directory will be distributed during Easter to 25,000 homes and businesses through ROYAL MAIL door to door delivery to the Blackdown Hills area (9 postcodes).

Cost for an entry is just £45 (BHBA members) £65 (for non-members).

To become a member of BHBA, Call 01823 681484 St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3SJ info@bhba.org.uk For details of business events and opportunities, visit our member website www.bhba.org.uk

advertise in the next edition, please call Louise on 01297 32601







Telephone numbers: AONB: 01823 680681

Neroche: 01823 680846 Making it Local: 01823 680626 Websites:

www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk www.nerochescheme.org www.makingitlocal.org

### Get active in the outdoors



◆ Snowdrops and stories at Otterhead

There are lots of ways to enjoy the countryside this month, with a range of activities throughout the

Join the AONB team for nest box building at Dunkeswell as part of National Nest Box Week, or come stargazing with a special evening

Hemyock, featuring the south west's largest indoor planetarium as well as outdoor astronomy. For children there is a magical storytelling Otterhead Lakes in half term.The Hills Hedge Laying .org.uk or call the AONB Association is offering office on 01823 680681



Learn the craft of hedge laying

courses in hedge laying and hedgerow crafts. You can also get stuck into practical conservation tasks to prepare habitats for spring, or blow away the cobwebs with walks at Culmstock Beacon and Otterhead. For full details walk at of all of these events, visit our website Blackdown www.blackdownhillsaonb



◆ Search the stars with astronomer Simon Ould

### February events

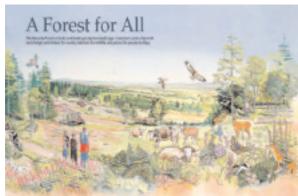
- 2 Culmstock Beacon walk
- 5 Hedgelaying day course, Yarcombe
- 9 Neroche volunteering day
- 12 Otterhead snowdrop walk
- 13 Hedgerow chair course, Buckland St Mary
- 13 Hazel hurdles course, Buckland St Mary
- 16 Build a nestbox, Dunkeswell
- 23 Magic Lakes story walk, Otterhead
- 26 Stargazing in Hemyock
- 26 Coppicing day course, Combe Wood
- 27 Butterfly habitat work party, Quants

## Making it Local funding workshops

Development Officers, Kate Tobin and Julie Fergusson, will be holding 2 workshops for those businesses and community groups who are considering applying to
Making It Local for
funding. Come along and • chat through your project ideas and gain somehelpful tips on filling in your application forms. The workshops will be held on:

- ◆ Tuesday 1 February 10am to 12noon – Wellington Community Centre.
- ♦ Tuesday 8 February 10am to 12noon Whitford Village Hall. If you are interested in coming along please contact the Making It Local office on 01823 680626 e-mail or makingitlocal@devon.gov.

### Winter walks in the Neroche Forest



One of the best ways of lifting the spirits in winter is to get out for a walk in the countryside. The Neroche Forest offers short walks and more adventurous hikes, or just a wander in the woods to explore some of its fascinating history. For an easy walk on level ground

◆ The new information panel at Staple Hill

wildlife and human activity in the forest. There is another breathtaking view is from the top of the castle beacon at Castle Neroche. From the car park follow the path through the ramparts of the Castle to the steps which run up to the beacon top. A new bench seat, carved with poetry, is due to be installed here in the early spring.

together

without any mud, visit For a more adventurous walk, strike out Neroche. Staple Hill all-ability onto the Herepath from Staple Hill or trail – a one kilometre Castle Neroche. The whole circular trail loop from Staple Hill is 13.5 miles - a good day's walk or a car park, taking in the half day's ride. magnificent This time of year, with the leaves off the viewpoint over the trees and the undergrowth at a minimum, Vale of Taunton. New is a good time to explore for this month on this archaeological remains in the forest. Lumps and bumps on the forest floor trail is an information may be historical features of various panel, based on a speciallykinds, spanning more than a thousand years of human activity. commissioned

At Staple Park Wood, you can follow the boundary of the old medieval deer park, from the top of Underhill Lane, down Whitford Lane and through Staple Park Wood as far as Staple Lawns. massive earth bank would once have carried a pale - a tall wooden fence to keep the deer in.

Take a wander up through the woods on Orchard Hill and you may spot the low ramparts of an Iron Age hillfort - a smaller less well-known cousin to Castle

At Priors Park Wood, accessible via the track into the forest from the Holman Clavel, you can see the remains of a pillow mound – a medieval rabbit warren in the form of a long rectangular earth mound up on the slopes which were cleared of conifers a few years ago.

Further west at Quants, accessed from the lane running north from Forches Corner, there is a host of features to discover in the grazed woods and glades. The old Taunton Corporation began building a reservoir here in the years just before World War II, but it was never finished. Amongst the woods you can now find the tall valve shaft tower, weirs and part-completed embankment.

These and many other aspects of the history and heritage of the northern Blackdown Hills are explored in a new book, entitled 'Along the Wild Edge', which will be published by the Neroche Scheme in March. Full details in the next edition of this paper.

LOTTERY FUNDED

Blackdown Hills AONB, Neroche and Making it Local, St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, EX15 3SJ

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership is funded by Natural England, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council.

The Neroche Scheme is led by the Forestry Commission. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, supported by the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership, Natural England, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council, The National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Somerset Art Works

painting which brings

all the



Making it Local is a locally managed grants scheme in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB areas incorporating funding from the EU, Defra, South West RDA and Leader+





















### Homes & Gardens

### Builders Question - from Mr R Clapp

My pipes froze over the recent cold spell whilst we were away is there any thing we should have done or can do in the future to prevent this happening again?

Firstly ensure all the pipework in your loft space is adequately lagged. If you are going away during a cold spell don't switch your heating off but turn the thermostat to a low setting. If you are leaving your home vacant for a lengthy period you may consider turning the heating off and draining down the system.



What happens under you roof is more important than what is happening on it when the cold strikes!

### A pet can make a house a home - embrace the trend of nature

Birds, bees and animals ing pets and we are now is Hilton and Geri Halliare going wild in our rooms as we embrace nature. We go for a walk on the interior's wild side.

It all began so simply with the love of a pet, so no-one is more surprised than designer Ben de Lisi that his dog cushion is a 'bow-wow' success.

The bright red cushion with an appliqued image of a cute French bulldog has been a total sell-out in Debenhams, and there's now a waiting list for customers who want to get their paws on the £18 item

It's even attracting high bids on sites such as eBay, and Steve Light-foot, home director at Debenhams says: "We've been amazed by this. It's literally been the fastest selling cushion in the store's history.

"There seems to be a real trend for celebrat-

sourcing a range of cat cushions to cater for lov-ers of all things feline."

A slightly bemused Ben de Lisi says: "All the cushion was meant to be was a tribute to my sweet little dog, Ella.'

The dog lover, who has three French bulldogs - Luce, Noya and Teya - took a break from designing red carpet gowns to create his homeware range for Debenhams.

He explains the inspira tion: "As well as making me smile, using Ella's image is meant to conjure a feeling of heart and home which we need in these uncertain times.

While it's predictable that when we're feeling insecure we want to be surrounded by comforting objects, owning pets has also recently become high profile.

Celebrities such as Par-

The trend for animal well have sported the real deal - small, pampered pooches or 'handbag

dogs' as they're now la-

belled. While other stars,

from Kevin Spacey to

Kenneth Branagh, have

also been seen parading

fashion has been seen on clothes with pet graphics on t-shirts, so it was inevitable that pets - and creatures great and small have made the transfer into interiors.





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### Homes & Gardens

### Family run business can help

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range from veneering, mar- Combe Raleigh which is on quetry, parquetry, cabinet the Honiton to Dunkeswell making, woodturning, road. French polishing and sympathetic repairs, from the smallest scratch to the full and complete restoration of a piece of furniture.

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with any queries you may have.

If there is any particular piece you are looking for I am sure we would be able to help ou find it.

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For sales please call 01404 851298 for restorations please call 01404 850881 or email us at sales@alexanderpaulantiques.com

Pictured is our French antique cherry farmhouse kitchen table which sits on attractive turned legs and has one drawer in side rail, the cleated top has great colour and patina, priced £1495.



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## Leisure Review

Advertising sales: 01297 32601 louise@tindlenews.co.uk

Editorial: 01297 631120 blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

## Welsh man Rhys back on UK tour

THE ever-eccentric Gruff Rhys is back to tour the UK with his third studio album and a date at Bridport's Electric Palace on Friday, February 25th

The new album Hotel Shampoo is, like its name, drawn up by inspiration from the mini bottles of shampoo collected during 15 years of frequent hotel visits and the

people met over the last 15 years of performing.

Adding to an expansive range of creative work, which has seen two previous solo albums, the Welsh-sung Yr Atal Genhedlaeth and 2007's Candylion, the Mercury nominated project — Neon Neon, a number of high profile collaborations with the likes of Gorrilaz and Dark Night of the Soul, the Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse LP and finally, an experimental LP with a Brazillian TV repairman Tony Da Gatorra, titled The Terror of Cosmic Loneliness which goes hand in hand with Gruff's filmmaking debut Seperado.

This will be an exceptional opportunity to see such talent in an intimate environment.

Tickets are on sale now for £13.50 from Bridport Tourist Information Centre on 01308 424901.

Organised by ..... Send your Diary Dates to:
View from the Blackdown Hills, Tindle House, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or email

blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk. Please note: This is a free service and whilst we endeavour to include all entries, we cannot quarantee all listings submitted will be published. Please use one form per event

WE ARE UNABLE TO TAKE DIARY DATES LISTINGS OR QUERIES OVER THE PHONE Deadline for Diary Dates entries is on Fridays at 12 noon

### Diary dates

CHARD: Chard Guildhall Antiques and Collectors Fair from 8am to 2pm every Thursday. Free admission. A thriving fair with a good mix of regular and casual stallholders. Offering a fantastic range of good quality products. Including jewellery, books, watches, clocks, china, silver and much much more. Contact 01460 239567 for more information.

Thursday, February 3rd YARCOMBE: Lecture by Mr Phil Kerton on Sweet Peas. Starts at 8pm at Jubilee Hall, Yarcombe. Organised by Stockland and District Horticultural Society. Call 01404 881331 for more information.

CHARD: Blood donor session at Chard Guildhall.

Tuesday, February 8th

CHARD: Blood donor session at Chard Guidlhall

Sunday, February 20th

TAUNTON: Somerset Chamber Choir present an afternoon of delightful French choral masterpieces including the beautiful Duruflé Requiem. King's College Chapel, Taunton, 3pm. 01823 336344 www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk.

Tuesday, February 22nd
MERRIOTT: Merriott Gardening Club hosts a presentation by Mike Burks of the Castle Gardens Group on growing fruit and vegetables on the patio. 7,30pm at the Tithe Barn, Chruch Street, Merriott. More detailson 01460 72298.

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### Valentines Menu

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Confit Duck Leg Salad, Orange & Honey Dressing Baked Baby Goats Cheese, Crispy Leeks, Sweet & Sour Cherry Tomatoes

Main Course

Pink Roasted Rack of West Country Lamb, Dauphinoise Potatoes, Rosemary Jus Pan Fried Fillets of Sea Bass, Saffron New Potatoes, Sauce Vierge

Oven Roasted Corn Fed Chicken Supreme, Asparagus & Shallot Risotto, Parma Ham Crisp Wild Mushroom & White Truffle Tagliatelle, Parmesan Shavings & Rocket Salad

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### 'Afishionado' or not, find something to inspire you in Tonk's new book

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Gordon Ramsay, Heston Blumenthal and Jamie Oliver front a series of Channel 4 programmes aiming to make people more aware of diminishing fish stocks, Sarah O'Meara speaks to fish expert Mitch Tonks about how to choose and cook fish in a sustainable way.

A true 'afishionado', Mitch Tonks has spent his career lovingly cooking fish.

The chef and brains behind restaurant chain Fishworks says he is more at home preparing fresh turbot with parsley than rubbing peppercorns into fillet

His latest book, Fish, is a simple guide to cooking a diverse range of dishes, using ingredients you might not have heard of: "I say seafood is exciting because there are so many different species available to eat and enjoy," explains Tonks.

"Seafood is naturally the easiest thing to cook because it needs no adornment. Flavours like garlic, olive oil, sea salt and fresh herbs are all you need to make a fabulous fish supper."

As well as offering up a bucketful of delicious looking recipes in his book, Tonks delivers some basic cooking tips, wisdom about buying seafood and thoughts on sustainability.

"Don't always go for the obvious," he sug-gests. "I know we love our white fish, but do try other species like mackerel, gurnard, whiting, cuttlefish or plaice.

Tonks's fish buying tips:

· Check herring, mackerel and sardines are vibrant in colour and have hues of greens and purples. The scales should all be intact.

• The eyes should be bright, clear and convex. Sunken, cloudy eyes belong to fish a few days the wrong side of fresh.

· Have a look under the gills. They should be bright red. Any sign of brown means the fish is old.

· Smell your fish! Fresh fish smells of the seaside and old fish smells like fish!

· Fresh flatfish should be covered in healthy slime.

Here are some fish recipes to try...

Stew of coley, roasted peppers and small mullet (Serves 2)

2 x 200g de-boned coley fillets, skinned 200g rock salt 1 red pepper 1 green pepper 2tbsp olive oil 2 onions, finely sliced 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped 1tbsp tomato puree 125ml dry white wine Pinch of saffron strands 2 edium potatoes, peeled and cut into 2.5cm/1 inch cubes 1 fresh thyme sprig

2 bay leaves 2 small red mullet, filleted and pin-boned 1 x 400g can good quality Italian plum tomatoes 1tbsp fresh parsley, finely chopped 6 or 7 black olives, pit-

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

The day before, place the coley on a large plate or in a shallow dish and cover the fish in salt.

Leave to chill in the refrigerator overnight, then wash the salt off and leave to soak in a bowl of cold water for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas Mark 6.

Place the peppers in a roasting pan and cook in the oven for 10-15 minutes until blackened. Remove and place the peppers in a plastic bag, then seal the top and leave to cool for a few hours. When the peppers are cool enough to handle, peel off the skins, remove the seeds and roughly chop the flesh

Heat the olive oil in a large heavy-based frying pan, add the onions and garlic and frv verv gently for 10 minutes, adding a little water just

to soften them. Add the tomato puree and cook for a further minute, then pour in the wine and boil for a minute. Add the saffron, chopped peppers, potatoes, thyme, bay leaves, mullet fillets and tomatoes and stir together. It doesn't matter if the mullet fillets break up. this is what you want.

Add the coley and add just enough water (about one tablespoon) to cover the fish. Cover with a lid and leave to simmer for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are soft. Taste and season with salt and pepper, then stir in the parsley and olives.

Remove the bay leaves and thyme and serve

Crusty bread to with crusty bread.

If you love chilli. then a dried bird's eye chilli crumbled in during cooking is a wonderful addition

#### Seafood stew

(Serves 2) 4tbsp olive oil

shallot, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, chopped 2 tomatoes, roasted Pinch of saffron

strands 3-4 fresh thyme sprigs Splash of Pernod 200ml/1 cup white wine Selection of fish (see recipe)

200ml fish stock Sea salt

Fresh parsley or basil, chopped, for sprinkling Fresh bread to serve

When it comes to choosing your fish and seafood, ask your fishmonger what's in season. You need enough to fill large pan fitted tightly into a single layer. Mussels. skate, hake, gurnard and pollack all work well.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan, add the shallot and garlic and sweat gently until softened. Add the tomatoes, saffron and thyme sprigs and stir together. Pour in the Pernod

and tip the pan away from you allowing it to catch alight. Pour in the wine and simmer gently for two minutes. Add your chosen fish and enough fish stock to just cover, then leave to simmer for up to 10 minutes.

Remove the thyme and season with salt. Finally sprinkle over the chopped herbs and serve with plenty of bread to mop up the delicious juices.





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### countrysceneextra

Written by countryside correspondent

### Tony Jackson



## Readers tell of their desire to feed birds

ONE wonders how raptors, such as buzzards, are faring in this colder weather.

Sparrowhawks will, no doubt, be surviving in piratical fashion, but for buzzards little remains but road-kills and any carrion they can find. While the freeze was at its height, while driving on a main road near Dorchester I saw a buzzard land in the road ahead of me, intent on a rabbit carcase and seemingly oblivious to the traffic.

I have yet to see any fieldfares or redwings, though mistle-thrushes have been in evidence as they sought the mistletoe berries on my apple tree.

Now, what lies ahead in 2011? Well, if you have an interest in conservation and would like to know more, Dorset Wildlife Trust is running a new conservation skills programme beginning in the new year to train people in the practical work that is essential in order to conserve Dorset's wildlife and

If you have an interest in wildlife and nature and an aptitude for practical outdoor work you could be working with wildlife wardens throughout the county, using chainsaws and brushcutters to help protect rare habitats.

The programme has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, no formal qualifications are required but preference will be given to young people aged between 16 and

The one-year placements will be in with conjunction reserve management teams at Kingcombe Meadows in West Dorset, the Urban Wildlife Centre in East Dorset and also with the Mid-Dorset area team at Brooklands Farm headquarters to work on sites in North Dorset, Purbeck and South Dorset. Obviously, the programme offers the opportunity, in an apprentice capacity, for a potential career in conservation, so if you would like further information call Steve Davis on 07970 552659 or email him ats davis @dorset wild life trust. or g.uk.

Where have all my birds gone? That's the plea from Mrs June Oakes from Colyton who has written to me in puzzled vein

Living in the heart of the town, she has numerous bird feeders in her courtyard garden and, until a few weeks ago "the place was agog with birds, mainly sparrows but also the odd finch and starling".

Then, she writes, the birds suddenly stopped coming, for no apparent reason. No cat is involved and her neighbours, who also feed birds, have not experienced the same withdrawal symptoms. It is a puzzle but I wonder if the weather patterns are responsible?

During the bitter weather my feeders were eagerly patronised by sparrows, dunnocks, tits, even woodpigeons but once the thaw set in numbers crashed as more hedgerow and pasture food became available once again.

This, however, does not explain why this particular garden should be

deserted while others, nearby, have seen no fall-off in bird numbers. Any thoughts, please?

Another reader, Janet Lang from Seaton, has also kindly sent me a vivid description of the many birds which frequent her garden, including the odd song thrush, longtailed, coal, blue and great tits.

It is encouraging to know that so many readers feed and take an interest in their garden birds. Not only are they playing a vital role in the preservation and maintenance of numerous species, but for many folk, some perhaps house-bound, the presence of birds, in all their varieties, can be of great comfort.

Please keep feeding the birds Mrs Oakes and I believe they will return!

As I'm sure many readers are aware, the population of red squirrels on Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour, now standing at about 200, is one of the most important colonies of this beleaguered mammal in Britain today.

A scheme to help protect them has

received a boost from the John Lewis Partnership which runs Brownsea Castle as a holiday centre for its staff.

They have now agreed to sponsor the Dorset Wildlife Trust's red squirrel adoption scheme for a second year and this will enable vital conservation work on the pine woods where the squirrels live to continue.

As many readers will be aware, it is the wretched grey squirrel, imported from North America, which has been responsible for the near total destruction of our once so common red squirrel.

Larger and more aggressive, the grey has successfully competed for food and nest sites, whilst also carrying a virus which has spread to reds, killing them in large numbers.

I would be delighted to see the grey squirrel wiped out as it is nothing but a menace, not only leading to the loss of red squirrels. but destroying forestry and bird life.

That it can be controlled and eliminated has been shown by several concentrated purges but it demands co-ordination and the cooperation of all shoots and gamekeepers.

Currently many do their best to reduce grey squirrel numbers but, unfortunately, their efforts are undermined as many urban dwellers tend, not only to feed town-dwelling foxes, but also to encourage grey squirrels.

Recent studies have shown that the Brownsea red squirrels are of genuine west of England stock, while other squirrels on islands in Poole Harbour may have been introduced from further north.

In an ideal situation i.e an area where greys had been completely wiped out, it would be fascinating to introduce a small number of reds onto the mainland.

However, this is a pipe-dream at the moment and will not happen until aggressive action, on a national basis, is taken to eliminate the grey menace.

There was a time when one could almost guarantee to see a kestrel hovering over motorway verges, seeking voles and beetles, but for some reason their numbers have dwindled.

So, too, have the numbers of lapwings or pewits, largely due to loss of wetland habitat, so it was with pleasure that I saw a flock of several hundred lapwings flying overhead as I drove from Axminster

This neatly leads me into the latest Axe Estuary Birds email newsletter from the indefatigable David Walters.

Produced twice a month, and illustrated with colour pix, anyone with the slightest interest in bird life and natural history should make a point of receiving the two page

To contact Tony Jackson, write to: Country Scene, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or by email to: wardjackson@tiscali.co.uk

The views expressed are those of the columnist and not necessarily of the





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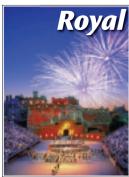
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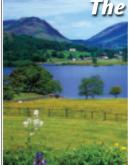
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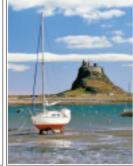
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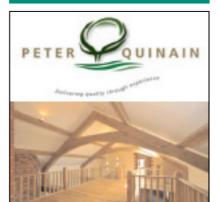


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VOLKSWAGEN'S new Amarok pick-up is making its UK debut at the 2011 Outdoors Show at the ExCel exhibition centre.

The event, which takes place at London's Docklands from January 13th to 16th, will see both the standard pickup and the limited edition Berghaus model shown in the UK for the first time.

Volkswagen expects the Amarok's appeal to be boosted by the largest load dimensions in its class and technology and safety systems not usually associated with the sector such as Electronic Differential Lock, Regulation, ESP with Hill Hold Assist, Hill Descent Control and off-road ABS.

Specialising in all aspects of outdoor pursuits and experiences, the Outdoors Show is now in its tenth year, and 2011 marks the event's first visit to the capital.

More than 125,000 visitors are expected to pass through the doors over the next four days.

Created in collaboration with the outdoor clothing specialists, the California Berghaus limited edition model will be available with a 2.0-litre BiTDI 180PS engine and boasting standard equipment including a bike rack, awning, Berghaus-branded carpet mats and waterproof seat covers, and exclusive 18-inch two-colour Dakar alloy

The Amarok goes on sale in the UK in Spring

• Lexus has fettled a special Lifestyle version of its RX full hybrid SUV for some of the rigours of winter with a package of accessories perfectly suited for those who love the great outdoors.

On the outside the new Lifestyle model comes equipped with roof rails and a rear bumper protect, plus front and rear under-run plates.

Inside there is a tough boot liner ready to cope with muddy boots, plus a refrigerated cool box that can equally keep food and drinks warm when the temperatures

Specified individually, these features would cost up to £1,500, but brought together for the new RX 450h SE-1 Lifestyle they add just £499 to the on-the-road price, which is from £48,899.

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The 508 range which will be available in five trim levels: Access, SR, Active, Allure and GT, while seven powertrain options will be available from launch.

Unusually, the 508 will be available with two different front suspension configurations. An all-new McPherson type front suspension will be the main option, while the sporty GT model features a drop link double wishbone front suspension similar to the design of its predecessor.

The five-model range starts with the 508 Access VTi 120 saloon from £18,150, and rises to £29,975 for the GT HDi 200 in SW estate form

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